

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 047639

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, CD, IR

SUBJECT: IRANIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CHAD

REFS: (A) TEHRAN 1765 (NOTAL), (B) STATE 44127 (NOTAL)

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1. THIS CABLE PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON RECENT DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN CHAD AND THEIR EFFECT ON POSSIBLE IRANIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CHAD (REF B). RELEVANT CABLES ON THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE BEING REPEATED TO YOU.
2. CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT: DIPLOMATIC PICTURE IS CHANGING RAPIDLY. CHAD AND LIBYA HAVE AGREED TO RESUME TALKS AIMED

AT ENDING THE FIGHTING IN NORTHERN CHAD, LARGELY AS A RESULT OF SUDANESE MEDIATION. THE JOINT SUDANESE-LIBYAN-CHADIAN ANNOUNCEMENT FEBRUARY 18 CALLS ON LIBYA AND CHAD TO RESTORE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, RESUME TALKS AT FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL AND SCHEDULES A MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENTS MALLOUM AND QADHAFI. CHAD ALSO AGREED TO WITHDRAW ITS UN SECURITY COUNCIL COMPLAINT AGAINST LIBYA. LIBYA HAS APPARENTLY AGREED TO SUPPORT CHAD'S APPEAL FOR A CEASEFIRE IN NORTHERN CHAD AND TO ENCOURAGE MUSLIM REBELS TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CHADIAN GOVERNMENT IN KHARTOUM. THE MEETING BETWEEN QADHAFI AND MALLOUM IS REPORTEDLY TAKING PLACE FEBRUARY 23 IN THE SOUTHERN LIBYAN TOWN OF SABHAH. NIGER'S KOUNTCHE AND SUDAN'S NUMAYRI ARE ALSO SCHEDULED TO ATTEND THE SUMMIT.

3. PROSPECTS: THE RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CHAD AND LIBYA WOULD BE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS. HOWEVER, PROSPECTS FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ARE UNCERTAIN. FOR ITS PART, CHAD HAS ALWAYS SHOWN A WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH LIBYA. LIBYA MAY BE RESPONDING TO COUNSELS OF RESTRAINT FROM OTHER STATES AND MAY BE TRYING TO PRESENT AN IMAGE OF REASONABLENESS TO THE OAU MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE NOW MEETING IN TRIPOLI. REBEL REACTIONS ARE ALSO UNPREDICTABLE. THE MUSLIM FORCES INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT OFFENSIVE IN CHAD RELY HEAVILY ON LIBYA FOR SUPPORT, HOWEVER, THEY

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RETAIN SOME INDEPENDENCE AND COULD IGNORE LIBYA'S CALL FOR A CEASEFIRE. DEEP DIVISIONS BETWEEN THE VARIOUS REBEL GROUPS WILL FURTHER COMPLICATE ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CHADIAN GOVERNMENT IN KHARTOUM. IF LIBYA HAS INDEED DECIDED TO CUT BACK ITS SUPPORT FOR THE CHADIAN REBELS AND BEGINS SERIOUS TALKS, A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION MAY BE POSSIBLE.

4. MILITARY SITUATION. CHAD'S PRESENT BARGAINING POSITION IS VERY WEAK. WITH THE FALL OF THE GARRISON AT FAYA-LARGEAU ON FEBRUARY 17 TO LIBYAN-BACKED REBELS, THE CHADIAN GOVERNMENT LOST ITS LAST MAJOR STRONGHOLD IN THE NORTH, AND EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER THE SPARSELY POPULATED NORTHERN HALF OF ITS TERRITORY. OVER THE LAST THREE WEEKS APPROXIMATELY FORTY PERCENT OF ITS 5000 MAN ARMY HAS BEEN KILLED OR CAPTURED. WHILE REBEL INTENTIONS ARE NOT CLEAR, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE REBELS COULD PRESS THE FIGHT AGAINST THE BADLY WEAKENED GOVERNMENT FORCES IN THE MORE POPULOUS AND ECONOMICALLY PROSPEROUS SOUTHERN HALF OF THE COUNTRY. THE FATE OF THE CHADIAN ARMY'S 500-MAN OUNIANGA-KEBIR GARRISON NOW RETREATING THROUGH REBEL-CONTROLLED TERRITORY WILL BE AN IMPORTANT TEST OF THE

CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT.

5. IRANIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE. IN ADDITION TO THE FOREGOING WHICH MAY BE SHARED WITH THE GOI, YOU MAY WISH TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS RE IRANIAN DECISION TO ASSIST CHAD:

(1) THE OUTLOOK FOR CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CHAD AND LIBYA IS UNCLEAR. CHAD'S PAST EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE WITH LIBYA HAVE BEEN UNREQUITED.

(2) WE BELIEVE THAT THE CHADIANS ARE THE BEST JUDGE IN DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT IRANIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD STILL BE USEFUL.
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(3) WHILE SUCH MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD NOT ALLOW CHAD TO REVERSE ITS LOSSES IN THE NORTH, IT COULD BOLSTER THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO DENY THE REBELS FURTHER VICTORIES IN THE SOUTH AND COULD HELP BRING THEM TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE.

(4) THE UTILITY OF SURFACE SHIPMENTS SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED. THE REBELS SPENT SIX MONTHS CONSOLIDATING GAINS BETWEEN LAST SUMMER'S DRIVE AND THE PRESENT OFFENSIVE.

(5) AT THE SAME TIME, THERE MAY BE SOME SMALL ITEMS IN THE CHADIAN REQUEST WHICH COULD BE AIR SHIPPED. THE SYMBOLIC VALUE TO THE CHADIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE.

6. FOR ALL POSTS: PLEASE INCLUDE TEHRAN AS INFO ADDRESSEE ON ALL FUTURE CABLES REGARDING CHAD-LIBYA SITUATION. VANCE

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